

What is claimed is:

1. A surgical sponge comprising a radiopaque marker, said marker having an x-ray density equivalent to at least about 0.1 g/cm^2 of BaSO_4 .
2. A surgical sponge as recited by claim 1, wherein said marker has an x-ray density equivalent to at least about 0.1 g/cm^2 of BaSO_4 for x-rays incident on said target in any direction.
3. A surgical sponge as recited by claim 1, wherein said x-ray density is equivalent to at least about 0.2 g/cm^2 of BaSO_4 .
4. A surgical sponge as recited by claim 2, wherein said x-ray density is equivalent to at least about 0.2 g/cm^2 of BaSO_4 .
5. A surgical sponge as recited by claim 1, wherein said marker has an area of at least 5 mm^2 in at least one projection.
6. A surgical sponge as recited by claim 5, wherein said marker has an area of at least 5 mm^2 in any projection.
7. A surgical sponge as recited by claim 1, wherein said marker produces an x-ray image having a distinctive, visually recognizable shape.
8. A surgical sponge as recited by claim 1, wherein said shape is at least one member selected from the group consisting of ovals, polygons, astroids, epicycloids, lobed shapes, alphabetic and numeric characters, and dingbats.
9. A surgical sponge as recited by claim 7, wherein said marker comprises at least one substantially spherical component having an x-ray density equivalent to at least about 0.1 g/cm^2 of BaSO_4 .

10. A surgical sponge as recited by claim 8, wherein said marker has an x-ray density equivalent to at least about 0.1 g/cm^2 of BaSO_4 for x-rays incident on said target in any direction.
11. A surgical sponge as recited by claim 1, further comprising a remotely detectable electronic article surveillance tag.
12. For use in association with a surgical sponge, a radiopaque marker having an x-ray density equivalent to at least about 0.1 g/cm^2 of BaSO_4 , said marker producing an x-ray image having a distinctive, visually recognizable shape.
13. A method of detecting a surgical sponge within a surgical patient, said surgical sponge comprising a radiopaque marker having an x-ray density equivalent to at least about 0.1 g/cm^2 of BaSO_4 , and said method comprising the steps of: (a) obtaining at least one x-ray of at least a portion of said patient likely to contain said radiopaque marker; and (b) examining said x-ray to detect and locate an image of said sponge.
14. A method of treating a surgical patient, comprising the steps of: (a) obtaining at least one x-ray of at least a portion of said patient likely to contain said radiopaque marker; (b) examining said x-ray to detect and locate an image of said sponge; and (c) carrying out a surgical procedure to remove said sponge from said patient.